

HABS MD-247

Brice House
Annapolis, Maryland

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Maryland

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
John H. Scarff, District Officer
1012 Keyser Building, Baltimore, Md.

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BRICE HOUSE
Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland

Owner: Carvel Hotel

Date of erection: c. 1745

Description:

Design shows English derivation from current fashionable Georgian mode. Scale extremely generous and decoration luxurious for colony. Noteworthy as prototype of the Annapolis mansions.

Additional data:

Erected by Thomas Jennings for his daughter and son-in-law, Captain John Brice, who came from Hampshire, England. Funds for house said to have come from Indian trade in Frederick, and design motifs reputed as derived from London set of Lady Sarah Jennings.

James Brice House
42 East Street
Annapolis
Anne Arundel County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-247

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MD,
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Addendum to
Brice House
Annapolis, Maryland

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM

JAMES BRICE HOUSE

HABS
MD,
2-ANNA,
7-

HABS No. MD-247

Location: 42 East Street (at Prince George Street), Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Stanley S. Wohl.

Significance: The James Brice House is the largest and one of the most elegant of the Annapolis five-part mansions. Some of the interiors have been attributed to William Buckland.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Please be advised: The data transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1936 for the Brice House was erroneous.

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1766-1773.
2. Original and subsequent owners: James Brice built the house on land he inherited from his father. The house remained in the possession of his heirs until 1874. In the 1920's St. John's College purchased the property as a faculty residence. In 1953, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley S. Wohl purchased the house. Restoration proceeded until 1957.
3. Alterations and additions: The house remained largely unaltered until the 1953-57 renovations. In the 1920's, St. John's College purchased the house as a faculty residence, and some minor alterations were made to adapt it for that use.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building was the largest of the five part mansions in Annapolis. The interiors of this Georgian mansion have been attributed to William Buckland.
2. Condition of the fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of the Exterior:

Main Block

1. Overall Dimensions: The main block of the house is two-and-one-half stories; the hyphens are one-and-one-half stories; the wings are two stories.
2. Foundations: The foundations, which extend about six feet above grade, are made of stone from Hartford County, Maryland. There are brick quoins at the window openings and cross-shaped stonework between them. This pattern is evident on the interior as well as the exterior. A flat arch of rubbed brick spans the basement window openings on the south facade. One stone at grade level, inside the southwest corner, bears the inscription "the beginning".
3. Wall construction: The exterior walls are of brick, laid in all header bond on the south and north facades, and English bond on the ends. There is a brick belt course above the first story windows on the south facade. Traces of patterning resulting from the placement of dark headers can be seen on all four walls of the main block but they are most evident on the north elevation.
4. Structural system, framing: Walls and partitions are of load-bearing masonry, stone below the first floor and brick above. The floor and roof systems are of heavy hewn cherry timbers; the joists are formed with mortar and tenon and then pegged. Spaces in the second floors are filled with oyster shell aggregate. The roof is truss-framed. The principle rafters are 5 1/2" x 12", resting near mid-span on 5 1/4" x 8 1/4" posts. Diagonal struts brace the lower portion of the principle rafters from the base of these posts. Principal rafters support two rows of purlins which in turn support rafters on centers. There is no ridgepole. The roof framing is in excellent condition and easily supports the heavy tiles which were installed during restoration.

The minor partitions in the attic are frame finished with split lathe and plaster. The openings in the brick walls and partitions have segmental brick relieving arches overhead and wooden lintels.

5. Porches: The present steps at the center of the north and south facades were installed during the renovation. They are modeled after a photograph, dated 1863, which is believed to reflect the original stairs.
6. Chimneys: There is a wide and unusually high brick chimney centered at each gable end. They have small caps of corbeled brick.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There is a rectangular doorway centered on both the north and south facades.

The doorway on the south facade is framed with a wooden architrave resting on a plinth. There are double doors; each leaf has four panels with moldings and raised fields above the door handles, and panels which are beaded below.

The north doorway has a segmental arch overhead which has been filled with brick to leave a rectangular opening. The original wooden architrave trim, set within this rectangular opening, has an egg-and-dart band at the outer edge and rests on a plinth. The double door, which resembles the south door, is a replacement.

- b. Windows: Typical openings have wide molded wooden casings set nearly flush with the plane of the wall. The windows are double-hung sash, with nine-lights-over-nine-lights at the first story and nine-lights-over-six-lights at the second. The sills are wood.

The central window of the south facade, located above the entrance, is quite unusual in its design. It is sometimes referred to as a triple window, and sometimes as a Palladian window. A wide rectangular central opening with double-hung sash, nine-lights-over-six-lights, is flanked by narrow openings, three-lights-over-two-lights. The narrow windows are framed by four fluted Corinthian colonnettes, with large capitals, which carry a wooden cornice with a dentil course, plain modillion course, and ovolo enriched with an egg-and-leaf motif. The colonnette bases rest on low pedestals with a blind balustrade. The window is set within a brick opening, spanned by a segmental arch. Within the arch the cornice is a segmental pediment. The pediment moldings are interrupted at the crown by a molded key block; under the key block is a sphere resting on a small square pedestal.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is gabled. It was originally covered with cypress shingles. During the renovation the later sheet metal additions were removed and tiles imitating the original shingles were made and installed. The original cypress shingles were not retained because of fire codes.
- b. Cornice: The elaborate cornice has a unique design. The upper portion has a fretted dentil course, astragal, narrow neck, ovolo enriched with a rope motif, small ovolo, soffit and corona; the lower portion is a wide frieze treated as a small, blind, arcaded balustrade resting on an astragal and cavetto. The frieze is carved of mahogany and is painted white. At each end a small section of the cornice breaks out to form a terminal motif which rests above a corbel of molded bricks. At each outer end is a wooden stop, shaped like a simple bracket, with a small pendant scroll at the outer upper corner.

C. Description of Interior:

Main block

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: The cellar extends under the main block. The area is divided into a central hall with two 2-bay rooms on the west and two 3-bay rooms on the right.
- b. First floor: The first floor follows the plan of the cellar. Through a central doorway one enters an L-shaped reception and stair hall, which opens on the right into a small warming pantry. The stairway ascends along the north wall to a landing at the end wall. Behind the stair hall is a three-bay ballroom. To the left of the stair hall is the dining room. Behind the dining room is the sitting room.
- c. Second floor: There is a longitudinal central hall. Two major bedrooms and a smaller room lie across the south front, and two major bedrooms with a dressing room between them lie across the north front. The west end of the hall has been altered to contain a modern bathroom.
- d. Attic: The attic has a central hall which opens on to several small rooms.

2. Stairways:

The main stair is an open well stair which rises to the attic level. The treads and risers are yellow pine. The handrail, balusters and brackets are mahogany. The ornamental brackets are carved with foliated C-scrolls in low relief. The balusters are square, three to each tread. The curtail step is scrolled to correspond with the lower curve of the railing.

An enclosed stairway to the basement is located below the main landing.

In a space to the left of the sitting room chimney, a narrow consealed stair ascends from the first to the second floor.

3. Flooring: The floors throughout the house are yellow pine boards, averaging 4 1/2" to 6 1/2" in width. Those in the ballroom are the most closely matched and most tightly laid.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered. The first-story rooms are wainscoted in wood; the second story rooms have plaster walls with a wooden base and dado rail.
 - a. Cellar: The walls and partitions have no finish over the structural stone and brick quoining. The brick walls above the first floor in the basement stairway were originally plastered. This plaster was in poor condition and was removed during renovation. The stair from the first floor to the ground level

b. First floor:

Entrance and stairhall: A plaster cornice 10" high extends around the room. The bed moldings consist of cavetto, ovolo and a course of plain modillions with rosettes in the soffits. Above this decorative motif are a corona, cyma reversa and cyma recta.

A wooden wainscot, measuring 2'8 1/2" high, extends around the room. The base of the wainscot is characterized by a plinth, ovolo, inverted cavetto and small ovolo. Above this base are molded panels and a dado rail consisting of a small ovolo, cavetto, narrow fascia and cyma reversa.

Warming pantry: This small room occupies one bay on the southwest corner. It has a plaster cornice with a picture molding, narrow frieze, rectangular bed moldings, wide soffit, corona and cavetto. A fireplace (now closed) is centered on the west wall. It has a wooden mantelpiece whose wide surround is plain except for an inner bead, and a cavetto on the outer edge.

Ballroom: A rich plaster entablature extends around the room. The frieze is pulvinated and enriched by a triple row of oak leaves bearing acorns. At the center of each wall a flower motif is superimposed on this decorative scheme. The walls have plaster panels above the wainscoting. The wainscoting is similar to that of the stairhall, except that it has a fret band in the dado rail.

A large fireplace opening is surrounded by figured white Italian marble framed by a wooden shouldered architrave. Above the architrave a frieze and cornice breaks out at each end over a shallow console. The frieze bears a central tablet carved with a large incised scallop shell and foliated C-scrolls in low relief. At each side are a cartouche and foliated C-scrolls. The console at each end of the frieze is enriched with three pairs of descending leaf sprays and a scroll and husk string. The entire mantelpiece rests on a marble plinth on the same height as the wall base. The overmantel has a single rectangular plaster panel framed by a wooden shouldered architrave. The projecting sides of the chimney are also plaster paneled. The hearth is of Italian marble.

Sitting room: The plaster cornice is like that of the stairhall. The walls are plainly plastered with a wooden base and chair rail.

The fireplace opening is surrounded by marble facing and a wooden architrave. The architrave consists of a small cavetto, enriched bead, ovolo enriched with a shell and leaf motif and an outer fillet. At each side of the architrave is a large scroll carved in high relief. The frieze is pulvinated except for the central third, which is a plain tablet. The bed moldings, which break out over the tablet, consist of cyma reversa, dentil course and ovolo. The cornice has a corona and cymatium. The mantelpiece rests on a marble plinth. The hearth is also marble.

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Dining room: The walls are plaster paneled above the dado rail. On the north and east walls are four superposed rows of panels, except at the door openings where a pair of panels take up the overhead area. This wall treatment continues on the south wall for a one-panel width. Except for that one panel width, the south wall has a single row of panels above the window level and a single tall panel between the windows. On the west wall, above the central mantelpiece, are three tall panels; there is a small vertical panel on each side of the mantelpiece.

The entablature is plaster and serves as a rich room cornice. The architrave is made up of an ovolo and a cavetto. The frieze is ornamented with a vine motif around a central floral motif. The bed moldings consist of a dentil course, enriched cyma reversa, and ovolo enriched with egg and leaf. There is a course of enriched modillions with rosettes in the soffit areas. Above the modillion course is the corona, a wide enriched bead, and cyma recta enriched with a row of leaves

The base of the wainscoting consists of a plinth and several small scale moldings. The dado rail has a cavetto, astragal, fillet, small cyma reversa and upper fillet.

All of the door and window openings are trimmed by wooden shouldered architraves which have two fascias and a small outer cavetto. The window recesses have seats; the area below the seat is treated as a pedestal with three horizontal panels. The doors to the sitting room and stair hall have eight panels. The door on the west wall, which leads to the hyphen, is a six panel door. It is matched on the other side of the fireplace by a cabinet.

The fireplace surround and hearth are marble. The mantel is a wooden architrave with slightly projecting shoulders. The architrave consists of small cavetto, double fillet, astragal, fillet, fascia enriched with a fret band, fillet, bead, ovolo, and outer fillet. At each side of the mantel is a large carved scroll ornamented with leaves which bear two flowers near the top. The lower part of the frieze swells, while the upper is concave. The section between has a plain tablet which extends upward through the dentil course of the cornice. The cornice consists of a bead, cyma reversa, dentil course, ovolo, corona, small cyma reversa, and cyma recta. Slight marks on the bed moldings indicate that the mantelpiece was altered at an early date. It is probable that this is an older piece modified by Buckland at the time of his work on the interior. The markings suggest that the earlier mantel may have had consoles over which the bed moldings broke out.

c. Second floor:

The stairhall has a plaster cornice, 9" high, which consists of cavetto, dentil course, fascia, small cyma reversa and cyma recta

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The junction with the central hall is treated as an arched opening, trimmed with wooden pilasters fluted above the dado rail, molded imposts, archivolt and triple key block.

The central hall has a coved ceiling with a segmental barrel vault which springs from a rather wide coved plaster cornice. The cornice consists of a fillet, astragal, cove, corona and cymatium.

The southeast room is two bays in length and one bay in depth. The plaster cornice consists of a cavetto, two fascias, small cyma reversa, corona and cymatium.

The two south windows have seats in the recess and a plain wooden pedestal below. The interior shutters are paneled, but the space below the stool is plain.

There is a small projecting fireplace on the east end. The opening surround is plaster with a wide bead, followed by a small wooden architrave. At each side of the fireplace is a paneled pilaster strip. The frieze is ornamented by a strapwork motif in which undulating bands interlace to form a square diagonal 'knot' at short intervals. Above this frieze is another which swells at the bottom and is concave at the top. The cornice is a succession of moldings without a soffit.

The northeast chamber has two windows on the north wall, one window and a projecting chimney on the east wall, and one door on the south and west walls. The plaster cornice consists of cavetto, enriched ovolo, enriched modillion course, corona, enriched ovolo, and cyma recta. The dado rail has an astragal and fillet along the lower edge.

The windows are provided with paneled interior shutters and paneling below the window seats. There are narrow pedestals under the window architraves.

The fireplace has a marble surround and a shouldered wooden architrave. Above the architrave is a frieze with a wide double fret band terminated at each end by molded consoles. The cornice is coved. The hearth is marble.

The south central chamber is one bay in width. The plaster cornice consists of cavetto, ovolo, neck, double fillet, an astragal with fillets near the edge of the soffit, corona and cymatium.

An arched opening near the outer wall connects with the southwest chamber; its trim is a wooden architrave with key blocks for imposts and a plain console for the 'keystone'.

The northwest room has a fireplace on the west wall, flanked by two doors which lead to cloaets. There are two doors on the south wall, one door on the east wall and two windows on the north wall. The plaster cornice consists of a cavetto, cyma recta, corona and a cymatium, enriched with a double row of leaves.

The fireplace opening has a segmental arch, with a plaster surround and a shouldered wooden architrave. The shoulders project vertically instead of horizontally, leaving a narrow panel with a central keystone block below the frieze. The frieze consists of an astragal and a scotia capped by a dentil course. The cornice is a succession of moldings without a soffit. The hearth is made up of two pieces of black slate.

The dressing room occupies a central bay between the northeast and northwest chambers. On the south wall is a central passage to the hall flanked by clothes closets. The bathroom and clothes closets on the north wall are modern.

The plaster cornice consists of cavetto, ovolo, corona and cymatium.

D. Description of Hyphens and Wings:

1. General Description of Exterior:

Each wing is approximately 22'x45'. Each hyphen is approximately 17'x28'. There is some evidence that the hyphens were the last sections to be built and that the wings were detached buildings. The western wing was the coach-house and the eastern wing was the kitchen and laundry.

2. West Wing:

The one-and-one-half story west wing is built of brick laid in Flemish bond. It has a gable roof. There is a central entrance on the west elevation and two bays of windows on each side. The west wall originally had a large doorway with a segmental arch on the north end and a smaller doorway and one or two windows on the south end. The north wall and gable were unbroken; the south wall had two casement windows in the gable one on each side of the chimney. There was a dormer on the east elevation. A heavy perforated board was positioned along the cornice of the west elevation; it served as a passage for doves into the dovecote

The south end of the building was used as the tack room; the north end served as the coach room and extended through the height of the building. A coachman's room was located above the tack room and was accessible by means of a small central stair. The loft along the west elevation served as a dovecote; at the center of the narrow compartment was an exterior door accessible by means of a ladder. The west wing was later converted to be used as a dwelling.

3. East Wing:

This wing generally corresponds on the exterior to the west wing. Originally there was a kitchen in the north section and a laundry in the south section. Each room had a chimney in the gable. The attic above was open. This wing was also altered to be used as a dwelling.

4. West Hyphen:

The west hyphen is brick, laid in Flemish bond. There is a door flanked by a window centered on each of the long sides. There are segmental arches over the door and window openings. The windows are double hung sashes, nine-lights-over-six-lights and have wooden sills. There is one dormer on the main elevation and two on the rear elevation. These are not original but are thought to replicated the original dormers.

Originally, there was a central hall on the ground floor, with an extension along the south wall for a straight stair, and a room at each end, The second florr was divided into two rooms.

5. East Hyphen:

The east hyphen is similar in size and design to its counterpart, except that it now has three dormers on each side. Originally this hyphen was merely an undivided passageway with a cove ceiling in the form of a barrel vault. This hyphen did not have a stair; it joined the house at ground level through a door connecting with the basement stair at its mid-point.

6. Northwest addition:

A one-story wing was added to the house in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its brickwork is not comparable to that of the original house. It has been retained as a bathroom.

D. Site:

1. Setting: The house faces south on East Street and occupies most of the end of the block between Prince George Street and Martin Street. Originally the site was larger, extending further to the west, the south and as far as King George Street to the east
2. Outbuildings: A cow-barn adjoined the kitchen wing on the east; portions of its walls remain at the edge of Martin Street. It was built of stone similar to that of the basement of the main block. Nothing remains of the original stables located to the northeast of the main house.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Secondary and published sources

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